



Washington State Department of Agriculture

PO Box 42560
Olympia, Washington 98504-2560
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Contact: [Hector Castro](#) (360) 902-1815

WSDA to hold “Ask the Expert” gypsy moth open houses

OLYMPIA – The [Washington State Department of Agriculture](#) (WSDA) has scheduled seven open houses in communities where it is proposing gypsy moth treatments in the spring of 2016.

WSDA staff, including entomologists, will be on hand to answer questions from community members on the agency’s proposal to eliminate introductions of European and Asian gypsy moth detected this past summer. The proposal calls for aerial treatments of a biological insecticide in areas of Seattle, Tacoma, Kent, Gig Harbor, Lacey, Nisqually, and Vancouver. The open house events will include maps of the treatment areas, information about gypsy moths, and material on the product proposed to treat the pests.

This year residents who can’t attend an open house in their community will have the opportunity to attend a “virtual” open house. The virtual open house will be a webinar presentation and an opportunity to submit questions for a panel of experts to answer. Registration for the webinar is available on WSDA’s website and Facebook page. The remaining six open houses will be held in affected communities.

All [open houses](#) will be from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm on the following dates:

- February 16th – Virtual “Ask the Experts” open house webinar – [Register online](#)
- February 17th – Gig Harbor City Hall, 3510 Grandview Street, Gig Harbor
- February 23rd – Kent Memorial Park, 850 N Central Ave, Kent
- February 24th – Miller Community Center, 330 19th Ave E, Seattle
- March 1st – Vancouver Public Library, 901 C Street, Vancouver
- March 3rd – Olympic View Elementary School, 1330 Horne St NE, Olympia
- March 10th – Fabulich Center, 3600 Port of Tacoma Road, Tacoma

In 2015, WSDA trapped 32 European gypsy moths, the most the department has trapped since 2006. Additionally, 10 of the even more damaging Asian gypsy moths were trapped. Prior to the 2015 trapping, no Asian gypsy moths had been found in Washington since 1999.

Gypsy moth is a high-risk, invasive threat to Washington’s environment. Gypsy moth has defoliated millions of acres of forest across the Northeast and Midwest. If left unchecked, gypsy moths could devastate Washington’s forests. It has been detected in Washington every year since 1977, but permanent populations have not been established here because of the state’s consistent trapping and eradication projects.

This year WSDA is proposing aerial applications of a biological insecticide that is approved for use on organic food crops. The insecticide, Btk or *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*, is registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([EPA](#)). It is found naturally in the environment and has an excellent safety record around people, pets, birds, fish, bees and other beneficial insects while being effective for controlling caterpillars.

WSDA is acting in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) prior to finalizing the proposal. The treatment plan should be finalized by April.

Visit agr.wa.gov/gypsymoth to register for gypsy moth e-mail alerts and to register for the virtual open house webinar. The public may also contact WSDA with gypsy moth questions at gypsymoth@agr.wa.gov or by calling the toll-free hotline, 1-800-443-6684.

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